

**James
Schwartz...**



My Nontrad Story

THIS IS MY *Story*

I was born into an Old Order Amish home, the youngest of 5 children and 107 cousins. No one in my family has gone to college, or even finished high school. I grew up helping on the farm, quit school after 8th grade, and worked in my father's construction business.

I endured many conversations and debates with relatives, friends, and even myself about the spirituality, wisdom, practicality, and importance of pursuing a degree. Is that "piece of paper" really necessary? Is it going to be worth it in the end? I concluded that it wasn't "wrong," and that it would indeed be worth it.

With my sights set on my future, I decided to pursue a higher education. I received an Indiana Honors GED and was accepted to Indiana-Purdue University, Fort Wayne. I spent a summer of private algebra tutoring just to get into my first semester, and became the first of my generation —the first of 107 cousins— to go to college.

I'm now a Junior with a 3.97 GPA, majoring in Electrical Engineering Technology and Information Technology. I was privileged to spend a semester studying abroad at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia in 2014, and I am accepted as an exchange student to University of Bern, Switzerland this Fall.

Although I'm a few years behind the traditional college crowd, I'm excited to have made the decision and commitment to get a degree. I know the time, discipline, and dedication it requires will pose some challenges, but I'm

convinced it will prove to be an enriching experience and beneficial asset in the long run. Getting my degree will grant me the privilege of looking back on all of the challenges I faced and being able to say, "I did it." No one will be able to take it from me. The experience itself will be priceless, the knowledge and skills will be evidence, and the degree will be proof.